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KALINGA SA LOKAL NA MANLILIKHA

Safeguarding the rights of Palawan Artisans

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ANALYSIS

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1. Executive Summary

This policy paper discusses the experiences and rights of artisans in Sofronio Española, Palawan, Philippines, aiming to fill a significant gap in existing research. Artisans in this context are skilled individuals who create handmade products and play a vital role in preserving traditional culture and contributing to the local economy. The paper provides a comprehensive situationer on Palawan artisans and offers recommendations for local government implementation, considering economic, cultural, and social dimensions.

The economic situation of Palawan artisans is challenging, with opportunities for improvement in financial support, marketing, and business registration processes. The cultural situation highlights the need for cultural preservation, skill development, and protection of indigenous knowledge. Governance-related gaps relate to capacity-building, coordination, and financial mechanisms to support artisans.

Existing initiatives and policies, both at the international and national levels, offer a supportive framework for protecting and promoting artisan rights. The UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, along with Philippine legislations like the Manlilikha ng Bayan Act, the National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009, and the Philippine Creative

Industries Development Act, provide essential support for artisans.

At the local level, Sofronio Española has taken steps to establish its Municipal Culture and Arts Council and promote traditional craftsmanship. The municipality's One Town, One Product program and the Jama Mapun School of Living Traditions are notable initiatives. However, there are areas for improvement, such as enhancing capacity-building, cultural mapping, and local financing and marketing support.

The paper recommends a multi-dimensional approach, involving stakeholders from various sectors, to support artisans in the short, medium, and long term. These recommendations encompass economic support, cultural preservation, and social empowerment, emphasizing capacity-building, financial assistance, and market development, among other strategies. This paper also highlights that the protection and empowerment of Palawan artisans are crucial for preserving cultural heritage and enhancing economic prospects in the region. Finally, it underscores the importance of collaboration between local government units, national resources, and stakeholders to bridge the gap between policy and local implementation, ultimately promoting the rights and prosperity of artisans in Palawan.

2. Introduction

The experiences and rights of artisans in the Philippines, particularly in the municipality of Sofronio Española in Palawan, have been largely overlooked in existing research. A significant gap also exists in the documentation of the already-limited initiatives undertaken by government agencies, non-government organizations, civil society, and the private sector to safeguard and promote the rights of these artisans. This policy paper aims to fill this gap by providing a situationer on Palawan artisans and recommendations that engage multiple stakeholders focused on local government implementation.

Defining Filipino Artisans

Artisans, in the context of this paper, refers to individuals who skillfully create handmade products. Artisans are not only defined by their craftsmanship but also by their strong sense of social consciousness as they pass down cultural skills from one generation to the next (Ratten et al., 2019). Artisans also play a multifaceted role in Philippine society, serving as the custodians of traditional culture and the arts while contributing to the economy by crafting and selling their handmade products. The Philippines boasts a diverse array of crafts, encompassing skills such as weaving, pottery, wood carving, metalworking, basketry, embroidery, and jewelry-making.

In the province of Palawan, Sofronio Española stands out as a coastal municipality with a rich cultural and artisanal heritage. Local artisans in Sofronio Española are known for their expertise in mat-weaving, utilizing materials like pandan and neco basic color or synthetic dye (Sarmenta & Lim, 2022). This municipality is also home to Jama Mapun weavers whose traditional crafts focus on banig (local mats) with intricately woven designs (Sarmenta & Lim, 2022). In addition to this, Sofronio Española is also home to the Palaw'ans, who specialize in the art of basket weaving.

3. Palawan Artisans' Rights and Situation: Focus on Sofronio Española

A. The Importance of Promoting Artisans' Rights

Promoting artisan rights becomes a moral imperative for three broad reasons. First, artisans must be protected because they serve as custodians of Palawan's traditions and cultures. Second, artisans mainly economically depend on their craft, which fuels the local economy. Third, protecting the rights of artisans is integral to achieving government targets, especially those concerning sustainable development, community empowerment, local industries, and international commitments, among others. These three broad reasons are mutually reinforcing, wherein the validity of one rests on the validity of the others. An elaboration of these three broad reasons follows.

Cultural Significance. Artisans are crucial for preserving the cultural heritage of Palawan. Promoting artisan rights allows these artists to share their culture with the world, fostering appreciation and respect for indigenous traditions. By protecting the rights of these artisans, traditional crafts and skills can also be passed down through generations, thus ensuring the continuity of the region's cultural identity (Ardpruksa, 2023). Artisans often work within close-knit communities, passing their knowledge to families and community members, which also strengthens community bonds and promotes a sense of pride and identity (UNESCO, n.d.). Finally, traditional crafts are not only a source of cultural exchange and understanding but also serve as a means for artisans to become "storytellers" through their craft. (Leynes, 2023).

Economic Significance. Artisanal products play a big part in the Philippine economy. The Philippine Trade and Industry's 2021 annual report mentions that the country's creative industry sector is poised to become a key driver of Philippine trade, including outputs from artisanal industries. Studies from various parts of the world have demonstrated that providing training and capabilities-enhancing programs to artisans can enhance their employability and increase their numbers (Ogbeifun, 2011). This, in turn, contributes to local economic growth. In Palawan, artisanal crafts play a significant role in the local economy (Reyes et al., 2017), and safeguarding their rights is essential to ensuring the sustainability of their livelihoods and income generation. Additionally, promoting the rights of artisans can serve as an effective strategy to reduce rural-urban migration and alleviate poverty (Bellver et al., 2023). Empowering artisans also enables economic diversification in rural areas, reducing dependence on a single industry, such as fishing in coastal Sofronio Española. This diversification enhances the resilience of

local economies. Finally, promoting authentic artisanal products can attract tourism (see Ratten et al., 2019; UNESCO, 2023).

Governance Significance. Simply put, the Philippines government is responsible for protecting and promoting artisans' rights. This is enshrined in the Philippine Constitution, which guarantees the right to culture and the right to a livelihood. The rights of artisans are also intrinsically tied to sustainable development. For instance, allowing Indigenous peoples to practice their craftsmanship and cultural traditions creates incentives for forest conservation (Fabro, 2022; Ladrado, 2022), an essential aspect of sustainable environmental protection. Aside from this, artisans can play a role in promoting environmental sustainability by using sustainable practices in their craft and by raising awareness about the importance of environmental protection. This is crucial especially given that from 2001 to 2022, Sofronio Espanola lost 9.00 kha of tree cover, equivalent to a 25% decrease since 2000, and 4.68 Mt of CO₂e emissions (Global Forest Watch, n.d.). Governments can also play a crucial role in enacting policies to protect and promote artisans' rights, recognizing their work's cultural significance. These policies contribute to the broader preservation of cultural heritage, a point emphasized by Leynes (2023). Finally, promoting the rights of artisans will aid governance by serving as another link of cooperation between local and national government agencies towards fulfilling our national targets and international commitments.

B. Situation of Artisans in Palawan

The situation of artisans in Palawan is challenging, with weaknesses that can be classified under economic, cultural, and governance. However, some strengths can be built upon, such as the artisans' skills and traditions, as well as the interest in preserving their work. Reflecting the above discussion on the importance of promoting the rights of artisans in Palawan, the situationer is also divided into three parts: economic, cultural, and governance. As above, it is important to note that the situation of artisans in Palawan in particular, and in the Philippines in general, are simultaneously affected by economic, cultural, and governance structures interacting with each other.

Economic Situation. The strengths of artisans in Sofronio Española include having some access to raw materials through propagation (Sarmenta & Lim, 2022). However, their lack of access to digital channels to promote and sell their work, especially during of economic shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic (as highlighted by Piper et al., 2023), poses a significant challenge. Meanwhile, other weaknesses include limited market access, which is

typically facilitated through word-of-mouth (Sarmenta & Lim, 2022), the threat of climate change to the availability of raw materials (Fabro, 2022), and reduced demand for artisanal products due to the combined impacts of shocks like the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change (Fabro, 2022). Furthermore, many artisans are self-taught, requiring access to training and resources to enhance the quality of their products (Sarmenta & Lim, 2022). Finally, the geographical distance between the market and the artisans' community hinders their mobility and sales (Sarmenta & Lim, 2022), leading to low-income and unstable livelihoods.

Cultural Situation. Strengths among artisans in Sofronio Española include their ability to preserve skills in the processing and production of woven mats with some level of innovation, and a genuine interest in preserving artisan traditions (Sarmenta & Lim, 2022). Meanwhile, weaknesses are evident in the stifling of demand due to the twin threats of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change, which, in turn, jeopardize the cultural preservation of the craft (Fabro, 2022). Finally, Palawan's indigenous

cultures and crafts are not consistently documented and preserved, and a lack of official support for preserving and promoting indigenous art forms makes it challenging for artisans to maintain and share their traditions.

Governance Situation. Strengths in governance include some support and patronage from the local government unit (LGU) of their municipality (Sarmenta & Lim, 2022). There is also some support from the national government aimed at preserving cultural knowledge, including the National Commission for the Culture and the Arts' (NCCA) School of Living Traditions (SLT), and support from non-governmental organizations such as the Non-Timber Forest Products–Exchange Programme (NTFP–EP), which has aided local artisans in venturing into online selling. Meanwhile, weaknesses in governance are apparent in the lack of social protection for artisans, with reports of unpaid orders that these artisans are compelled to shoulder. Proper coordination among different levels of government to protect and promote the rights of Palawan artisans also remains inadequate, a point that will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

4. Existing Initiatives and Policies

A. International Policy Context

The global landscape of cultural policy and international cooperation underwent a transformative shift in 2005 when the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions was adopted at the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris. This momentous event recognized of the profound cultural and economic significance of contemporary cultural expressions crafted by artists and cultural professionals. A cornerstone of this convention is its unwavering support for the artistic freedom and socio-economic rights of artists—, principles that resonate with both international and national policies safeguarding basic human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The convention acknowledges and upholds the sovereignty of individual countries to formulate and implement policies that protect and promote their unique cultural expressions. Furthermore, it advocates for integrating cultural policies into each nation's overarching developmental objectives and strategies. In the spirit of international collaboration, it fosters dialogue on cultural policies, capacity building, technology transfer, co-production, and co-distribution. A participatory system of governance is a central theme, emphasizing the essential role played by civil society in pursuing the convention's goals.

Despite the Philippines standing as one of the leading exporters of creative goods and services, it has not yet become a signatory to the 2005 UNESCO convention. The

prospect of the Philippines ratifying the convention promises improved access to domestic and foreign markets. Additionally, such a commitment would enable the government and the creative and cultural industries in the country to qualify for support from the International Fund for Cultural Diversity (IFCD). The IFCD offers the potential for funding projects and activities that would bolster the vibrancy of this sector. The IFCD is open to the government and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), including local artisans. Furthermore, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) that support local artisans across a spectrum of initiatives may also tap into the IFCD's resources. For context, in 2014, the Philippines' creative product exports reached an estimated value of 915 million USD, with fashion products accounting for 279 million USD and arts and crafts for 162 million USD.

B. National Policy Context: Philippine Legal Framework Protecting and Promoting Cultural Heritage

The legal framework for protecting and promoting cultural heritage in the Philippines is firmly established through a combination of constitutional provisions and national legislation. The 1987 Philippine Constitution, under Article XIV, Section 13, emphasizes the state's responsibility to safeguard the exclusive rights of scientists, inventors, artists, and other talented individuals to their intellectual property and creations. Furthermore, Sections 14-17 of Article XIV underscore the state's commitment to preserving, enriching, and dynamically evolving the country's historical and cultural heritage, including its

artistic creations and indigenous cultures and traditions.

This commitment finds concrete expression in Republic Act No. 7355, commonly called the *Manlilikha ng Bayan Act*, passed in 1992. This legislation recognizes and supports national living treasures, known as *Manlilikha ng Bayan*, who are traditional folk artists. The law acknowledges the critical role played by these traditional folk artists as bridges between the skills of the past and the opportunities of the future, with the primary objective of revitalizing their respective communities' artistic traditions. It establishes mechanisms to identify and assist qualified traditional folk artists, enabling them to share their works locally and internationally.

In 2009, Republic Act No. 10066, also known as the *National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009*, was enacted to bolster further the protection and conservation of the country's rich cultural heritage. This act includes traditional arts and crafts as part of the intangible cultural heritage. It strongly emphasizes protecting the well-being and professional development of cultural workers. Notably, this law led to the establishment of the NCCA, which plays a pivotal role in implementing these cultural preservation measures and promoting Philippine culture.

A key provision within Republic Act No. 10066 mandates LGUs to document both traditional and contemporary arts and crafts, encompassing their processes and the artisans responsible. Furthermore, LGUs are directed to sustain the sources of raw materials that underpin these cultural expressions, as well as to encourage and support traditional arts and crafts as viable sources of income for their respective communities. This commitment to cultural preservation has been fortified by the recent approval of Republic Act No. 11961, an Act strengthening the conservation and safeguarding of Philippine cultural heritage through cultural mapping and an enhanced cultural heritage education program.

To facilitate the realization of these cultural preservation goals, the NCCA collaborates closely with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Tourism (DOT), and other relevant government agencies to assist LGUs in protecting traditional and contemporary arts and crafts. This collaboration is designed to make these cultural expressions viable in current and future markets and, importantly, promote and celebrate local communities' unique heritage and identities. In this way, the legal framework in the Philippines provides a robust foundation for preserving, enriching, and promoting its cultural heritage.

C. Landmark Legislation Promoting and Supporting the Local Creative Industries

The Philippines has taken a significant step toward nurturing its creative industries with the enactment of Republic Act No. 11904, or the *Philippine Creative Industries Development Act (PCIDA)*. Enacted into law on July 28, 2022, this legislation holds great promise for local

artisans and the broader creative sector within the country. The PCIDA has a far-reaching mission: to promote and bolster the creative industries by safeguarding and enhancing the rights and capabilities of creative entities, artists, artisans, creators, indigenous cultural communities, content providers, and all stakeholders involved. Its ultimate aim is to propel the growth and evolution of the Philippine creative industries.

Within the framework of the PCIDA, the concept of creative industries is given a well-defined context specific to the Philippines. These are trades engaged in by individuals or organizations, producing cultural, artistic, and innovative goods and services that spring from human creativity, skill, and talent. Such endeavors possess the potential to generate wealth and livelihood through the creation and utilization of intellectual property. The creative industries encompass those directly or indirectly engaged in the creation, production, manufacturing, performance, broadcasting, communication, exhibition, distribution, and sale of works and other subject matter, all following with existing laws, rules, and regulations on intellectual property rights protection (Republic of the Philippines, RA 11904, Section 3, 2022).

This landmark legislation also identifies at least nine domains enveloped within the creative industry sector in the Philippines. Notably, it designates a domain for traditional cultural expressions, encompassing tangible products and intangible customs, practices, and expressions of traditional Filipino culture and heritage. This encompasses a rich tapestry of arts and crafts, gastronomy, culinary practices, cultural festivals, and celebrations.

Central to the PCIDA's implementation is the formation of the Philippine Creative Industries Development Council (PCIDC), an attached agency to the DTI. The PCIDC is mandated to devise a long-term plan for nurturing and advancing the Philippine creative industries. Its programs create opportunities, spur employment, foster human resources development, establish financial-enabling mechanisms, and offer incentives to sustain Filipino excellence in the creative industries.

One pivotal component of the PCIDC's role is the formulation and execution of the Philippine Creative Industries Development Plan. This comprehensive plan sets the stage for defining objectives, targets, strategies, and activities focused on developing and promoting the creative industry in the Philippines.

Several mechanisms were established under the PCIDA to support the creative industries further. These include access to shared services facilities of DTI, research and development support programs of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), digital services and training platforms of the Department of Information and Communication Technology (DICT), and a Creative Voucher System, all provided by various national agencies. The PCIDA also addresses the critical aspect of financing, directing financial institutions owned, controlled, or supported by the government to prioritize credit

assistance and guarantee schemes for the creative industries. A Creative Industry Development Fund is set to be established, and earmarked for research and development, trade promotion, human resource development, and welfare support for artists, workers, and stakeholders.

Educational bodies such as the Department of Education (DepEd), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) will play a lead role in formulating a Creative Education Plan, which includes policies, programs, and strategies vital for human resource development, capacity-building, and consumer empowerment within the creative industries.

Local implementation of the PCIDA will be driven by Local Culture and the Arts Councils (LCACs), established by LGUs. These councils are mandated to support the PCIDA in implementing its various programs and functions and to formulate, plan, coordinate, implement, and assess policies, programs, activities, and projects that promote and develop their locality's creative industries. Notably, they will maintain a database of business support organizations and creative workers associations within their respective LGU's territorial jurisdiction. The PCIDA stands as a landmark piece of legislation with far-reaching implications for the creative industries in the Philippines, aiming to usher in a new era of creativity, growth, and opportunity.

D. Other Relevant National Policies to LGUs

In the Philippines, a concerted effort is underway to bolster the creative industries, support local artisans, and nurture the growth of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Amidst this endeavor, numerous national policies have been enacted, each designed to empower LGUs to promote and advance creative entrepreneurship and the economic well-being of artisans. The synergy of these policies is poised to redefine the landscape of creative industries within the nation.

Among the pivotal policies in this endeavor is Republic Act No. 10644, commonly known as the Go Negosyo Act, which directs LGUs to establish Negosyo Centers. These centers serve as vital one-stop shops, offering comprehensive assistance to creative industry MSMEs and entrepreneurs. Their services encompass a wide array of government-related facets, ranging from intellectual property registration to product and business registration, as well as guidance on accessing loans, grants, and benefits programs. The Go Negosyo Act is a beacon illuminating the path to creative industry success within LGUs, as endorsed in Section 23 of Republic Act No. 11904.

Moreover, Republic Act No. 11960, or the One Town, One Product (OTOP) Philippines Act, is pivotal in advancing local artisans' products. This legislation champions the

preferential use of Filipino labor, domestic materials, and locally produced goods. Its wide-reaching scope encompasses the arts and crafts crafted by local artisans, including products such as coco coir, weaves, bamboo creations, paper artistry, and woodwork. The law extends a lifeline to MSMEs by offering a package of support mechanisms, empowering them to develop innovative and superior products. This support covers quality enhancement, product development, design, packaging, standards and regulatory compliance, marketability, production capability, and brand development, among other facets.

The commitment to fostering creativity and protecting indigenous products and traditions is further reinforced by the Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines (IPOPHL). Through Memorandum Circular No. 2022-022, issued in November 2022, IPOPHL defined the Rules and Regulations on Geographical Indication (GI). This policy document bestows GI protection upon local products that meet specific criteria. Such protection enhances the safeguarding of products per the 1997 Intellectual Property Code of the Philippines. This particularly benefits the agricultural and handicraft sectors, promoting the preservation of traditional and indigenous products. GIs must be registered under associations of producers directly involved in the production and trade of goods, and even government agencies or LGUs may apply for GI registration if the origin of the goods falls within their jurisdiction.

Furthermore, Republic Act No. 9501, known as the Magna Carta for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises, is instrumental in shaping the national policy that seeks to uplift and strengthen these enterprises. The creation of the Small Business Corporation (SB Corporation) facilitates access to finance, a much-needed resource for the growth of MSMEs. This support encompasses wholesale lending to smaller financial institutions, cooperatives, and foundations, in addition to direct lending to MSMEs.

The Shared Service Facilities (SSF) Project, part of the ongoing initiative, is designed to augment the competitiveness of MSMEs by offering machinery, equipment, tools, systems, accessories, and the associated knowledge and skills, under a shared system.

These national policies catalyze transformative change, creating an environment conducive to the growth and prosperity of creative industries and local artisans across the Philippines. By promoting entrepreneurship, protecting intellectual property, and bolstering the position of local products, these policies herald a brighter future for creative endeavors in the country.

E. Local Level Policies and Initiatives in Sofronio Española, Palawan

Local governments play a vital role in preserving, promoting, and nurturing cultural heritage within their communities. Republic Act No. 10924, also known as the

General Appropriations Act of 2017, mandates the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) to ensure that LCACs in compliance with specific circulars 2002-81, 2013-98, and 2017-53. This was further reinforced by DILG Memorandum Circular No. 2017-133, which encourages all LGUs to create a local council to promote culture and arts, coordinate with national government agencies (NGAs) and NGOs, and appropriate funds to support its various activities (DILG, 2017). The goal is to empower these councils to protect, preserve, and promote cultural heritage and the ethnicity of their local communities.

The creation of LCACs serves a twofold purpose. On the one hand, it acts as a catalyst for governance in the realm of "Tourism, Heritage Development, Culture, and Arts," which is a criterion for the prestigious DILG's Seal of Good Local Governance (SGLG). On the other hand, it fosters a profound connection to cultural traditions and artistic endeavors that define the identity of localities.

Against these national directives, Sofronio Española, a second-class municipality in Palawan, exemplifies commitment to cultural promotion. In December 2022, MThe municipal Mayor Abner Tesorio issued Executive Order 87, establishing the Municipal Culture and Arts Council, tasked with a range of responsibilities. The council's activities encompass the annual preparation of culture, arts, and cultural heritage plans, which are integrated into local development initiatives and the yearly budget ordinance. It is also charged with formulating programs and recommendations to nurture local cultural and artistic talents, traditional and contemporary arts and crafts, and their associated processes. This includes orchestrating cultural activities such as festivals, competitions, lectures, seminars, and symposia.

Sofronio Española's LCAC collaborates closely with various agencies and organizations, including NCCA-related cultural bodies and the province-wide Palawan Arts and Culture Council (PACC). A Tourism Office was established within the Municipal Planning and Development Office to bolster this cultural commitment, reinforcing tourism development. The Sangguniang Bayan further solidified this effort by approving, through Resolution No. 2023-100, a Tourism Development Plan that spans from 2023 to 2028. The plan provides a roadmap for enhancing tourism by outlining strategies, programs, and projects to showcase the municipality's culture and arts.

Of paramount importance to the municipality's leadership, led by first-term Mayor Abner Tesorio, is the empowerment of local artisans. Their mission is to generate livelihood opportunities while preserving their culture, sustaining local traditions, and handcrafting unique products emblematic of Sofronio Española.

The municipality's local handicraft industry represents a significant potential for driving economic development, creating employment opportunities, and securing income for local households. Palawan's OTOP Program identified handicrafts as Sofronio Española's flagship product. With

neighboring towns no longer producing similar products, Sofronio Española is poised to make a substantial economic and cultural impact through its artisanal craftsmanship.

Aligned with the NCCA's agenda of preserving local cultural heritage, the Jama Mapun SLT was established in Sofronio Española. Under the guidance of NCCA-recognized master mat weaver Janeth Hanapi, this SLT focuses on producing 'banig,' intricately woven mats with vibrant designs and patterns. It serves as a repository of cultural knowledge and skills, preserving traditions integral to the community's identity. The LGU aims to position itself as the Buri Pandan Capital of Palawan, celebrating a cherished tradition.

Beyond the local level, the Provincial Government of Palawan organizes the annual Baragatan sa Palawan Festival, a prominent cultural event in the province. This grand celebration provides LGUs across Palawan a platform to exhibit their unique cultures, traditions, and the local arts and crafts created by their artisans. Together, these initiatives and policies enrich and celebrate the cultural tapestry of Sofronio Española and the broader province of Palawan.

F. Local Policy Gaps and Areas for Improvement

While Sofronio Española has taken significant steps in establishing its Municipal Culture and Arts Council, there are notable gaps and areas for improvement in the local policy landscape. The LGU's culture and arts initiatives are poised to grow and better support local creatives, including artisans. However, several key considerations need to be addressed to create a more robust and effective framework for supporting artisans and safeguarding their rights.

Foremost is that, LGU officials and technical staff must familiarize themselves with the PCIDA provisions. This new law brings about a range of responsibilities for LCACs, particularly in promoting and protecting the rights of local creatives, including artisans. Capacity-building programs should be introduced to ensure that the LGU fully comprehends how to adopt PCIDA at the local level.

Furthermore, the LGU needs to conduct cultural mapping exercises to target support efforts more effectively. This exercise will result in a regularly updated database of local artisans and their products. Armed with this data, the LGU can formulate cultural policies, design relevant programs and projects, and better align its support with the needs and rights of artisans. Actively involving artisans and their associations in local governance processes is crucial for shaping these policies and plans.

The existing vision to protect the rights and support local artisans often falls under the municipality's tourism development umbrella. To streamline its functions and services effectively, the LGU should consider rationalizing

its approach, making it clear which offices handle matters related to local artisans. Coordinated efforts with barangay-level officials are essential to ensure that support initiatives trickle down to artisans. To reach local artisans more efficiently, the LGU should facilitate the services and technical assistance relevant national government agencies offer. The wealth of training, seminars, and workshops aims to boost the capacities of artisans throughout the value chain, from sourcing raw materials to marketing their products. This will also entail establishing a support and grievance mechanism to assist local artisans with business and legal concerns.

The Jama Mapun SLT is a notable asset in the municipality. To harness its potential fully, the LGU should consider channeling funds to support the SLT's initiatives, particularly in building a resilient teaching facility. The thriving handicrafts industry in Sofronio Española can benefit from streamlined business registration processes and requirements, simplifying the "ease of doing business" for local artisans. This sector should be prioritized in the LGU's local investment and development plans. Depending on the LGU's fiscal capacity, exploring

options like tax exemptions, incentives, or relief for artisans and handicraft-related businesses could be considered.

Access to financing is a pressing concern for local artisans. The LGU previously implemented a financial assistance program that included cash grants and small loans, but this was discontinued due to issues raised by the Commission on Audit. The LGU should carefully design a local financing mechanism to address the specific needs of artisans, enabling them to maximize their potential and support income-generating activities for their families.

Finally, local artisans need assistance in marketing their products. The LGU could consider reorganizing its local Negosyo Center to create a platform for artisans to display and sell their products. Additionally, the annual Baragatan Festival of the province could serve as a prime opportunity to showcase and promote local handicrafts. In sum, there are promising opportunities to enhance the support system for artisans in Sofronio Española and contribute to their livelihood and cultural preservation.

5. Stakeholders Map

Promoting and protecting the rights of artisans in Sofronio Española involves the collaboration of various stakeholders, each playing a distinct role in advancing the interests of local creatives and artisans. These stakeholders contribute in different ways to support the development, recognition, and empowerment of artisans within the community. A comprehensive overview of the key stakeholders is essential to understand these roles and the potential support that the local government can harness.

Figure 1: A map of stakeholders relevant to promoting the rights of Artisans in Palawan in general and in Sofronio Española in particular. They are divided into the government sector, civil society, and the private sector. Stakeholders are divided into primary stakeholders (with direct interest in the agenda) and secondary stakeholders (with indirect interest on the agenda).

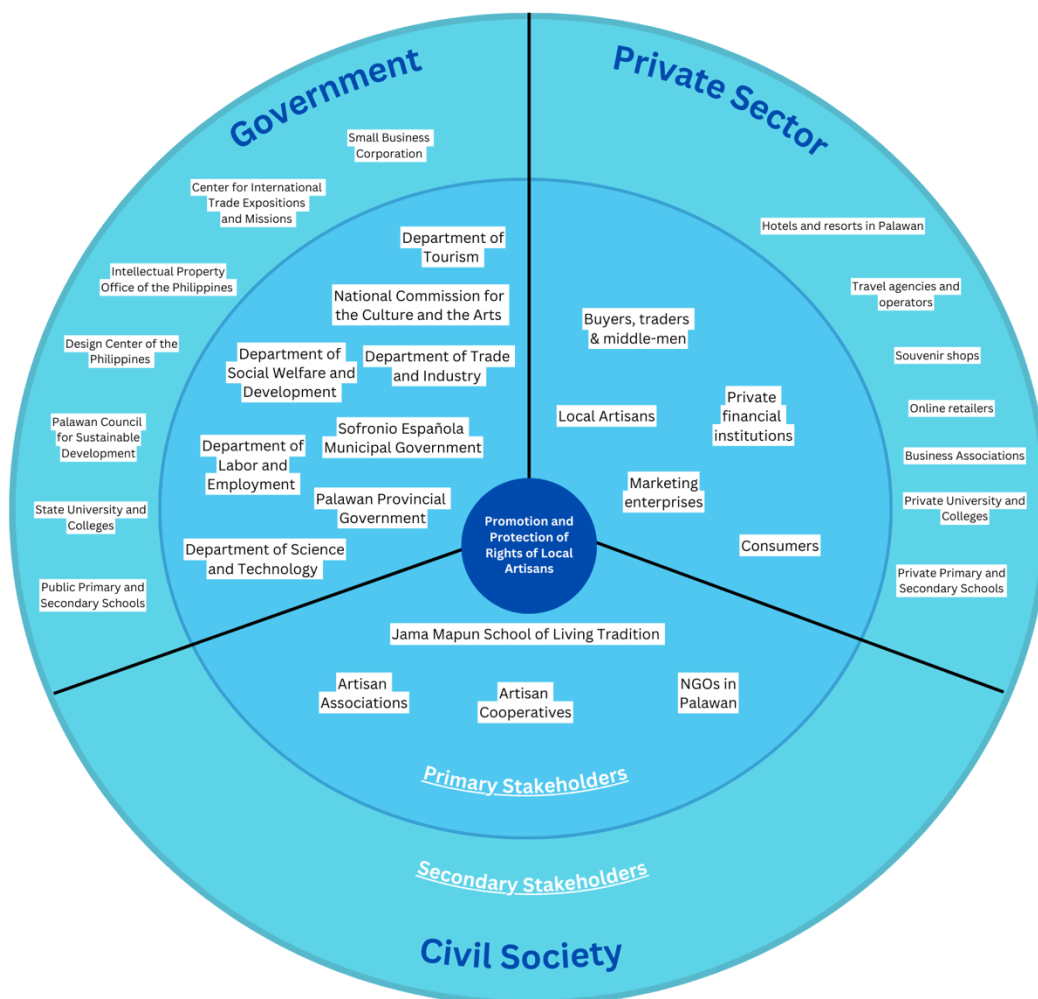


Table 1: A table organizing the stakeholders relevant to promoting the rights of Artisans in Palawan in general and in Sofronio Española in particular. They are divided into primary stakeholders and secondary stakeholders. Also included are their roles in the agenda and possible support for the local government unit.

STAKEHOLDER	ROLE IN PROMOTING AND PROTECTING RIGHTS OF ARTISANS	POSSIBLE SUPPORT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT
Primary Stakeholders		
Municipal Government of Sofronio Española	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formulate policies, programs, and projects to develop and sustain local cultural and artistic talents, cultural industries, and traditional and contemporary arts and crafts through the Municipal Culture and Arts Council - Provide technical assistance and training to local artisans 	
Palawan Provincial Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oversee the PACC and the delivery of its functions - Organize the annual Baragatan Festival 	Policy Development Regulatory Enforcement Coordination Partnerships
Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Bureau of Domestic Trade Promotion, Bureau of Small and Medium Enterprise Development, Regional and Provincial Offices https://dti.gov.ph	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop and implement policies in line with the PCIDA and the Magna Carta for MSMEs - Provide technical assistance and training to local artisans in business skills, product development, marketing, and finance. - Provide access to finance and other resources. - Establish and provide access to SSF to local artisans for increased productivity. - Promote products of artisans to both domestic and international markets through trade fairs and exhibitions. - Advocate rights of the local artisan in international trade negotiations, ensuring that their interest is accounted for. 	Policy Development Regulatory Enforcement Coordination Partnerships
National Commission for the Culture and the Arts (NCCA) https://ncca.gov.ph	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Serve as overall policy-making and coordination body concerning the preservation, development and promotion of national arts, culture, and heritage - Provide technical assistance and training cultural workers, including artists and local artisans 	Policy Development Regulatory Enforcement Coordination Partnerships

<p>Department of Tourism (DOT)</p> <p>https://dot.gov.ph</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote the country's tourism industry, which includes promoting and supporting the sale of locally-made products and services - Organize trade and travel fairs and exhibitions where local artisans can showcase their products - Work with LGUs to develop tourism products and services that can feature local artisans and their products, including the establishment of a tourism information center that sells locally-made products 	<p>Policy Development</p> <p>Regulatory Enforcement</p> <p>Coordination</p> <p>Partnerships</p>
<p>Department of Science and Technology (DOST)</p> <p>https://dost.gov.ph</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide technology and innovation assistance services, including research and development - Provide and transfer technology-based livelihood projects to remote communities through its Community Empowerment thru Science and Technology (CEST) program. 	<p>Service Delivery</p> <p>Partnerships</p>
<p>Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE)</p> <p>https://dole.gov.ph</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formulate labor policies for the protection, welfare, and empowerment of local artisans - Provide financial assistance to individuals and groups to start, expand, or restore their livelihood project, expand or upgrade an existing project, and restore or re-establish existing livelihood through its Integrated Livelihood Program (ILP). 	<p>Service Delivery</p> <p>Partnerships</p>
<p>Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)</p> <p>https://dswd.gov.ph</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide financial assistance to micro-entrepreneurs, particularly those with low or no income, through its Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP). 	<p>Service Delivery</p> <p>Partnerships</p>
<p>Jama Mapun School of Living Tradition (SLT)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preserve and promote the Jama Mapun mat weaving tradition in Sofronio Española - Teach younger generations and other community members the unique and creative tradition of mat weaving 	<p>Community Planning</p> <p>Partnerships</p>
<p>Civil Society Organizations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide knowledge-sharing and capacity building to local artisans and communities - Advocate the rights and interests of local artisans, especially in their active participation in the local development planning and governance processes - Some of the non-government organizations active in Palawan include Palawan Artisan Council, Center for Philippine Culture and the Arts (CPCA), NTFP-EP, Rurungan sa Tubod Foundation (RSTF), Oxfam Philippines, 	<p>Community Planning</p> <p>Partnerships</p>

People's Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group of artisans from the community who have organized themselves to be community enterprises in the form of associations and cooperatives - Some of the POs in Sofronio Española are Samahan ng mga Kababaihang Netibong Palawan sa Pulot Shore (SKNPPS), PalJama (Palaw'an and Jama Mapun) Association, and INA Producer Cooperative 	Community Planning Partnerships
Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Purchase goods and avail of services of local artisans to boost the local economy and support their livelihoods 	Citizen Engagement
Private sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Include buyers, traders, and middle-men of goods and services of artisans or community enterprises, which may also be in the form of business aggregators and social enterprises - Facilitate access to the market of artisans through marketing enterprises like CCAP Fairtrade for Development Inc. and CustomMade Crafts Center, Inc. (CMCC) 	Economic Development Community Planning Partnerships
Private Financial Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offer private loans to local artisans via private banks and micro-financing institutions 	Economic Development
Secondary Stakeholders		
Small Business Corporation (SBCorp) https://sbcorp.gov.ph	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement government-supported financing programs for MSMEs, including local artisans 	Service Delivery Partnerships
Design Center of the Philippines https://designcenter.ph	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide product design assistance to local artisans that will help elevate the value of their products in the market. 	Service Delivery Partnerships
Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (CITEM) https://citem.gov.ph	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Market and promote products of local artisans to global export markets - Organize trade fairs and missions to showcase the goods and services of artisans 	Service Delivery Partnerships
Palawan Council for Sustainable Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multi-sectoral body that oversees the policy development and implementation of the Strategic Environmental Plan (SEP) for Palawan - Issues resolutions and regulate non-timber forest products, which are common raw materials in the production process of artisans 	Policy Development Coordination Regulatory Enforcement Coordination
Hotels and resorts in Palawan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Direct buyers of products of local artisans - May provide display shelves within their facilities for tourists to buy 	Economic Development
Travel agencies and operators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote local artisan communities and their products in their tour offerings and packages 	Economic Development

Souvenir shops	- Sell products of local artisans to domestic and international tourists	Economic Development
Online retailers	- Provide a platform for local artisans to sell their products directly to domestic and international markets	Economic Development
Business Associations	- Facilitate access to the market of artisans through big business associations like the Philippine Chamber of Handicraft Industry (PCHI) and the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI)	Economic Development Community Planning Partnerships
Higher Education Institutions	- Include both public and private universities and colleges - Provide education, training, and extensions services to the local government, communities, and individuals (including artisans) - Conduct research and publish information materials (books, brochures, and journal articles) on preserving and promoting local culture, arts, and heritage. - <u>Palawan State University</u> established a Palawan Studies Center to promote local culture and arts study in the province	Service Delivery Partnerships
Primary and Secondary Schools	- Incorporate in the basic and secondary education curricula the rich indigenous culture, tradition, and arts practices in the locality to ensure this knowledge is passed on to younger generations.	Partnerships

6. Recommendations

The development and support of local artisans in Sofronio Española require a strategic and multi-dimensional approach, involving various sectors and considering short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals. The table below outlines key actions and strategies within three core dimensions – Economic, Cultural, and Governance/Social – that can guide the local government in promoting artisans' rights, skills, and economic stability.

In the short-term, the local government should focus on providing immediate financial and technical assistance to artisans to improve their skills and access to markets, alongside initiatives to promote traditional craftsmanship education and capacity-building measures. Strengthening the protection of artisans' rights and enhancing the coordination of relevant LGU units are vital actions in this phase. Establishing public-private partnerships and donor collaborations while improving coordination with national government agencies will also lay the foundation for long-term development.

As the medium-term approaches, the focus shifts towards facilitating access to local financing options and the ease of doing business for artisans, which can contribute to

their economic growth. Developing markets for artisan products and providing tax incentives will enhance economic opportunities for artisans. Simultaneously, expanding support to the existing SLT, digital promotion channels, and database development are crucial cultural actions. Creating a support and grievance service within the LGU further protects artisans' interests.

In the long-term, the LGU should aim to establish a dedicated funding facility with favorable loan terms for artisans. Cultural initiatives include documenting indigenous knowledge and practices, establishing museums and craft centers, and fully recognizing artisans' rights to intellectual property and self-determination. Developing institutional linkages with various government agencies for cultural preservation, product development, environmental protection, and sustainable sourcing of raw materials is essential for sustained support.

This multifaceted approach addresses local artisans' complex needs and aspirations, emphasizing the importance of economic, cultural, and governance/social support in Sofronio Española's development landscape.

Table 2: A matrix of recommendations for the local government unit to protect and promote the rights of artisans in Palawan in general and in Sofronio Española in particular.

	Economic	Cultural	Governance/Social
Short-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide financial and technical assistance to artisans to help them improve their skills, productivity, and market access. This includes micro-financing programs for artisans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote traditional craftsmanship education. • Provide capacity-building measures to share their culture and refine their products. • Ensure stakeholder consultation and publicize the annual cultural development plans crafted and approved by their respective local culture and arts councils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulate a local ordinance that would strengthen the protection of the rights of local artisans in line with the Philippine Creative Industries Development Act. • Rationalize functions and services of relevant LGU units and build capacities of technical staff to serve artisans better. Improve coordination with barangay-level officials. • Forge twinning partnerships with other LGUs for knowledge sharing and local cooperation • Establish public-private partnerships and donor collaborations. • Enhance collaboration with national government agencies (i.e., DTI, NCCA, DSWD, DOST, DOLE) in delivering technical assistance and capacity-building services to artisans. • Engage artisans, POs, and NGOs in the planning and development processes for the sector
Medium-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate artisans' access to local financing options through government or private-led lending. • Facilitate ease of doing business for local artisans • Develop and promote markets for artisan products through trade fairs, online platforms, and other initiatives. • Provide tax exemptions, incentives, or relief to artisans and related businesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide additional support to the existing SLT • Open digital and online channels for artisans to share their culture and promote their work. • Create, manage, and regularly update a database of local artisans and their products • Establish a recognition and awards program to celebrate local artisanship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote partnerships and collaborations with scholarship-granting institutions to facilitate research initiatives focusing on research interpretation to inform policymaking in the field. • Create a support and grievance service within the LGU to provide advice to artisans on business and legal concerns.

Long-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up an LGU Funding Facility that offers favorable loan terms to artisans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document indigenous knowledge, systems, and practices of local artisans. • Establish museums and centers for local crafts. This will cement tourism and local artisans' crafts within the locality's economic strengths. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full recognition by the government of the right to IP territories and self-determination. • Institutionalize and establish linkages with other government agencies such as NCCA (for cultural preservation), DTI (for product development), DENR (for environmental protection and sustainable outsourcing of raw materials), etc.
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7. Conclusion

This policy paper underscores the pressing need for local government units in Palawan to create an enabling environment that supports the rights and livelihoods of artisans in the province. Artisans, often marginalized and underrepresented, play a pivotal role in preserving cultural heritage, bolstering the economy, and enhancing Palawan's unique identity.

To address the economic, cultural, and governance challenges these artisans face, it is paramount for LGUs to facilitate linkages and actively engage in multi-stakeholder participation. The government should champion these rights by allocating funds, as encouraged by DILG Memorandum Circulars No. 2013-98 and No. 2017-133. This financial support, particularly in collaboration with national government resources like the NCCA funding, can empower local artisans to thrive.

Furthermore, LGUs should foster partnerships with business sectors to augment their resources and promote the rights of local artisans. This collaboration is instrumental in crafting and implementing policies, plans, and programs that genuinely address the needs of artisans, ultimately fostering a more supportive environment for them.

The intertwined relationship between safeguarding artisan rights and tourism resource allocation cannot be overlooked. The local government can leverage tourism revenues, among other sources, to protect and enhance artisans' rights. Simultaneously, when empowered and their rights ensured, artisans attract more tourism revenues, creating a mutually reinforcing dynamic.

With these recommendations and the active engagement of artisans, people's organizations, NGOs, and other stakeholders, the Palawan LGUs can bridge the gap between new national laws and their local implementation. There are promising opportunities coming from the national government that can be harmonized with the local government's capacity and resources.

Ultimately, the successful protection and empowerment of Palawan's artisans not only serve as a testament to the preservation of its rich cultural heritage but also offer an economic boost and contribute to the identity and prosperity of the province. In the spirit of inclusivity and local artisans' protection, these actions can safeguard Palawan artisans' rights and propel them toward a brighter and more secure future.

8. Authors' Biography

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Annex

List of Acronyms

Acronym	Full Title
CEST	Community Empowerment thru Science and Technology
CHED	Commission on Higher Education
CMCC	CustomMade Crafts Center, Inc.
CPCA	Center for Philippine Culture and the Arts
DepEd	Department of Education
DILG	Department of the Interior and Local Government
DICT	Department of Information and Communication Technology
DOT	Department of Tourism
DOST	Department of Science and Technology
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
GI	Geographical Indication
IFCD	International Fund for Cultural Diversity
ILP	Integrated Livelihood Program
INGO	International Non-governmental Organizations
IPOPHL	Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines
LCAC	Local Culture and the Arts Councils
LGU	Local Government Unit
MSME	Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises
NCCA	National Commission for the Culture and the Arts
NGA	National Government Agency
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
NTFP-EP	Non-Timber Forest Products–Exchange Programme
OTOP	One Town, One Product
PACC	Palawan Arts and Culture Council
PCHI	Philippine Chamber of Handicraft Industry
PCCI	Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry
PCIDA	Philippine Creative Industries Development Act
PCIDC	Philippine Creative Industries Development Council
PO	Peoples' Organization
RSTF	Rurungan sa Tubod Foundation
SGLG	Seal of Good Local Governance
SKNPPS	Samahan ng mga Kababaihang Netibong Palawan sa Pulot Shore
SEP	Strategic Environmental Plan
SLP	Sustainable Livelihood Program
SLT	School of Living Tradition
SSF	Shared Services Facilities
TESDA	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization